Area under Foodgrain Cultivation

4880. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the area under foodgrain cultivation has more or less remained constant at 125 million hectares since 1970-71; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to increase the yield per hectare?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPBK SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) The area under foodgrains cultivation has fluctuated between 119.28 million hectares and 131.16 million hectares during the period from 1970-71 to 1998-99. In 1998-99, however, the area under foodgrains was 125.36 million hectares.

(b) To increase productivity and also production of foodgrains in the country, the Government is implementing centrally sponsored Integrated Cereal Development Programmes in rice/wheat/coarse cereals Based Cropping System Area, National Pulses Development Project etc. Under these programmes/project, incentives are provided to farmers for use of high yielding varieties of seeds, application of integrated pest management, propagation of scientific water management including micro irrigation and use of improved farm implements. Research is also being continuously undertaken to develop improved technologies so as to enhance the productivity and production of foodgrains. Field demonstrations on farmers holding including training of farmers and farm labourers is also being organised for effective transfer of technology.

Damage to Horticultural Produce

4881. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that horticultural produce are highly perishable and suffer heavy damage and deterioration in quality during post harvest handling;

(b) whether it is also a fact that losses during post harvest handling have been estimated at 37 per cent of the crop produced; and

(c) if so, what action Government have taken to prevent these losses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPBK SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Although, no scientific study to assess the quantum of damage and deterioration in quality during post harvest handling of perishable horticultural produce has been conducted, it is estimated that losses vary between 8 to 37 per cent in various crops in different stages as per Report of the Sub-Working Group on Post Harvest Management, Marketing and Exports for the Ninth Plan.

(c) Government have approved a Scheme of Capital Investment Subsidy for Construction/Expansion/ Modernisation of Cold Storages and Storages for implementation during the Ninth Five Year Plan (1999- 2000). The scheme is being implemented by the National Horticulture Board (NHB) which is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture. Besides, Department of Food Processing Industries is also implementing a scheme for creation of infrastructural facilities of post harvest management and cold chain facilities for food processing including integrated project of cultivation and processing of mushroom, hops, gherkins and baby corn. Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) under the Ministry of Commerce is also giving grants-in-aid for setting up modified/ controlled atmosphere cold storages for facilitation of export and reduce the post harvest losses.

Oil Seed Production

4882. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that oil seed production during 1991—2000 was 21.1 million tons against an average of 23.25 million tons for the previous four years;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for this drop in production; and

(c) what steps Government intend to take to increase production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SBPBK SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) According to advance estimates for 1999-2000, the oilseed production is likely to be 21.54 million tonnes as against an average of 23.25 million tonnes for the four years viz. 1995-96 to 1998-99. The production of oilseeds during the year 1999-2000 is likely to decline due to aberrant weather conditions.